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HERNE'S OAK.

BY W. PERRY

the Identity of Herne's Oak, showing the Maiden Tree to have been the Real one. Post 8vo, *plates*, *cloth*, 3/6 1867

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HERNE'S OAK.

From a Drawing taken on the ſpot the day it fell by Miſs Ingram.

A TREATISE

ON THE IDENTITY OF

HERNE'S OAK,

SHEWING

THE MAIDEN TREE TO HAVE BEEN THE REAL ONE.

By W. PERRY, Wood Carver to the Queen,

5 NORTH AUDLEY STREET, GROSVENOR SQUARE.

London: L. BOOTH, 307 *Regent Street, W.*

1867.

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MISS BURDETT COUTTS,

BY

HER MOST OBEDIENT AND GRATEFUL SERVANT,

THE AUTHOR.

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*** The Type Ornaments and Initial Letters are chiefly Fac-ſimiles of thoſe employed in printing the Firſt and Third Folio Editions of Shakſpeare, and the Firſt Edition of Shakſpeare's Sonnets.

INTRODUCTION.

THAT ſuch a work ſhould be undertaken by a Wood Carver will be to ſome a matter of ſurpriſe, and they will doubtleſs deſire to know how a thing ſo unuſual in literature ſhould have been brought about. I will explain.

In the month of November, 1863, being at Windſor on buſineſs, I was preſented by a friend with two or three fragments of a tree, commonly known as 'Herne's Oak;' which had previouſly ſtood near a ſpot called the Fairies' Dell, in the Home Park at Windſor; and had fallen from natural decay on the laſt day of Auguſt preceding.

I ſubſequently was employed to make articles of

virtu by thoſe poſſeſſing ſome of the wood. By the Queen's commands I executed a buſt of Shakſpeare for Her Majeſty, after the pattern of one I had previouſly made for a gentleman, a great admirer of the Poet, out of a piece of oak from Shakſpeare's Barn at New Place, Stratford-on-Avon, the late reſidence of the immortal Bard.

Upon ſhowing this Buſt to ſome gentlemen intereſted in Shakſperian matters, I found that ſome highly intellectual men were of opinion that the tree, out of which the Buſt was made, was not the genuine Herne's Oak, and believed that that tree had been cut down in 1796. This was a ſhock to my faith; but being ſubſequently employed upon the wood, I felt myſelf in a manner identified with it, that a reproach impended over me if it was ſpurious, and, therefore, that a duty of ſatisfying myſelf at leaſt devolved upon me, as to whether the late tree was, or was not, the Oak mentioned by Shakſpeare in the *Merry Wives of Windſor*.

With this view, as opportunity offered, I from time to time made inquiries, collecting what information I could, examining what evidence came in my way, and after carefully reflecting upon the whole, I arrived at the concluſion that the late tree was, without

doubt, the real one; and upon expreſſing my belief to ſome who differed, and ſtating ſome of the grounds upon which I had formed my opinion, a deſire being expreſſed for an opportunity to read the evidence upon which I had baſed my belief, that they may have an opportunity of fairly conſidering the ſubject, for the purpoſe of arriving at a juſt concluſion themſelves thereon, I decided upon making the preſent attempt, and accordingly have written the following pages. And while I am fully ſenſible of the difficulty of the taſk, on account of the number of diſtinguiſhed men who have written on the ſubject holding oppoſite views, I have not the leaſt doubt I ſhall be able to lay before the reader ſuch evidence, as will induce him to admit, that I have *ſome* good evidence whereon the opinion I hold is baſed, if not ſufficient to incline him to participate in my own belief.

To take the reader through all the diſcuſſions that have taken place on the ſubject would be tedious and unneceſſary; it would alſo occupy more time than I could well ſpare. I ſhall therefore apply myſelf to the chief points of evidence principally; and my taſk is made the more eaſy by a book called the *Annals of Windſor*, a very ably-written work, which enters into

the ſubject at conſiderable length. I may remark, by the way, that it does not quote the evidence in favour of the late tree ſo liberally as that againſt it: this, no doubt, ariſes from what they produce having been obtained from a prejudiced ſource, rather than a wiſh to treat the ſubject unfairly.

I admit, however, that to that work I am indebted for ſome valuable information, which indirectly ſupports my own views. The reader will therefore perceive, that I purpoſe quoting conſiderably from the *Annals of Windſor*, in my endeavour to make clear the title of the late tree to be called 'The Real Herne's Oak.'

HERNE'S OAK.

THE intereſt felt in this venerable tree, as the reader is aware, ariſes not ſo much from an old tradition having been connected with it, as from *its* having been incorporated with that tradition into one of the plays of Shakſpeare, and made the theatre of a very humorous ſcene in that play.

There having been no documentary evidence of a very early date, *i. e.* ſoon after Shakſpeare's time, to ſhew the exact tree which was entitled to the name of 'Herne's Oak,' modern conjecture has occaſionally pointed out various old trees in the vicinity of Windſor Caſtle, attaching probabilities to each of them; but

theſe, the rival claims, have vaniſhed, and the laurel has by common conſent, been left to the contention of two trees of ancient date in the vicinity of the Chalk-pits, or Fairies' Dell, as more uſually called, in the Little Park.

That both theſe may have had ſome claim is evident, from the fact, that there were ſome people at the cloſe of the laſt century, believing in the one, and ſome in the other; but the queſtion is, Which had the beſt claim, or was moſt entitled to the diſtinction upon known evidence?

In the commencement of inquiries there is nothing ſo ſafe as beginning at the fountain-head. Therefore, let us firſt ſee what Shakſpeare ſays:—

In the firſt folio edition publiſhed 1623, Actus Quartus, Scena Quarta,—

> *Miſ. Page.* There is an old tale goes that *Herne* the
> Hunter (ſometime a keeper heere in Windſor Forreſt)
> Doth all the winter time, at ſtill midnight,
> Walke round about an Oake, with great rag'd-hornes,
> And there he blaſts the tree, and takes the cattle,
> And make milch-kine yeeld blood, and ſhakes a chaine
> In a moſt hideous and dreadfull manner.
> You haue heard of ſuch a Spirit, and well you know

The ſuperſtitious idle-headed-Eld
Receiu'd, and did deliuer to our age
This tale of *Herne* the Hunter, for a truth.
Page. Why yet there want not many that do feare
In deepe of night to walke by this Hernes Oake:
But what of this?
Miſt. Ford. Marry, this is our deuiſe,
That *Falſtaffe* at that Oake ſhall meete with vs.
Page. Well, let it not be doubted but he'll come,
And in this ſhape when you haue brought him thether,
What ſhall be done with him? What is your plot?
Miſt. Pa. That likewiſe haue we thoght vpon: & thus:
Nan Page (my daughter) and my little ſonne,
And three or foure more of their growth, wee'l dreſſe
Like Vrchins, Ouphes, and Fairies, greene and white,
With rounds of waxen Tapers on their heads,
And rattles in their hands; vpon a ſodaine,
As *Falſtaffe*, ſhe, and I, are newly met,
Let them from forth a ſaw-pit ruſh at once
With ſome diffuſed ſong: Vpon their ſight
We two, in great amazedneſſe will flye:
Then let them all encircle him about,
And Fairy-like to pinch the vncleane Knight;
And aſke him why that houre of Fairy Reuell,
In their ſo ſacred pathes, he dares to tread,
In ſhape prophane.'

We are at firſt perplexed as to what period the 'old tale' originated. Falſtaff, the intended victim, is a character of the early part of the 15th century; but is Herne of that period alſo? Mrs. Page ſays the

'ſuperſtitious idle-headed Eld received and did deliver,' to the age in which ſhe lived, 'this tale of *Herne* the Hunter for a truth.'* It appears ſcarcely likely that ſuch a tradition would have been handed down for two whole centuries orally. We can remember, when children, hearing tales of like import told by our grandſires; we have now only an imperfect recollection of them, ſo faint, indeed, that they are not likely to be tranſmitted to our poſterity, even if we had faith in them: therefore we can put ſome limit in our minds, as to the probable time when Herne lived. Ireland, in his *Picturesque Views on the Thames*, ſtates that he was a keeper in the foreſt in the time of Elizabeth; his authority for that ſtatement we know not, but Mr. Halliwell has diſcovered that in the time of Henry VIII. there was one 'Rycharde Horne,† yeoman,' among the names which 'be examyned and have confeſſed for hunting in his majeſty's foreſts,' and has

* In the edition of the play publiſhed 1602, Horne, not Herne, is uſed.

† I have preſumed Mrs. Page to have been an imaginary character of the period when the play was written, when the tradition was floating about, and there appears no evidence of Herne the Hunter having exiſted at an earlier date than Henry VIII., which period I think very ſuitable to Mrs. Page's ſtory.

ſuggeſted that this may have been the very one. I think it not improbable: the early time of Elizabeth ſeems ſcarcely remote enough for the manner in which Mrs. Page ſpeaks of the 'Idle-headed Eld,' and incline to the date ſuggeſted by Mr. Halliwell.

The next point is the performance of Herne, viz. to

> 'Walke round about an Oake, with great rag'd-hornes,
> And there he blaſts the tree, and takes the cattle,
> And make milch-kine yeeld blood,' &c.

This paſſage ſuggeſts a tree ſo ſituated that Herne, 'with great rag'd-hornes,' could 'walke round about' it. It alſo ſuggeſts a tree ſo formed by nature, and, preſerved by care,* that cattle would delight to lie and take ſhelter under it. I am not aware that this latter point has ever been diſcuſſed, or even taken into account, but it ſeems to me a very important one. Herne could not 'take,' or hurt, cattle under a tree which afforded no ſhelter to induce them to congregate there; and the tree which the opponents of the late 'Herne's Oak' conſider the real one was, according

* This I purpoſe more fully explaining at the concluſion of this work.

to their own account, one of that deſcription. It alſo ſtood on the very edge of the pit, or dell, ſo that the ſituation was rather an inconvenient one for Herne, 'with great rag'd-hornes,' to 'walke round about.' But I forget; it is a ghoſt or demon of whom I am writing, and not a mortal being: ſo ſhall paſs on for the preſent to what Mr. Page ſays, viz. :—

> 'Why yet there want not many that do feare
> In deepe of night to walke by this Herne's Oake.'

This expreſſion plainly ſhows that it muſt have ſtood near a path, for people to fear walking by it. This the late tree certainly did. A path from the dairy to the Caſtle went within about 40 feet of it; it ſtood nearer the path than any other tree thereabout, and therefore, ſeemed the moſt likely one to have been alluded to. I now paſs on to Act 5, Scene 3, where, in anſwer to Mrs. Ford's queſtion, Mrs. Page ſays:—

> 'They are all couch'd in a pit hard by Herne's Oake, with obſcur'd lights, which at the very inſtant of *Falſtaffe*, and our meeting, they will at once diſplay to the night.'

This expreſſion, 'hard by,' certainly indicates an object very cloſe to the pit, and no doubt has given

riſe to the ſuppoſition, that the old pollard ſtanding on the 'very edge of the pit,' being the neareſt, muſt neceſſarily have been the one intended; but the reaſons previouſly advanced to the contrary muſt not be forgotten, nor muſt one or two other conſiderations be overlooked in connexion with it, one of which Scene 5 helps us to. In the latter part of Quickly's addreſs to the fairies ſhe ſays:—

'But till 'tis one o'clocke
Our Dance of Cuſtome, round about the Oake
Of *Herne* the Hunter, let us not forget.
Evans. Pray you lock hand in hand, yourſelves in order ſet,
And twenty glow-wormes ſhall our Lanthornes bee
To guide our Meaſure round about the tree.'

Here it is evident, that the tree to be danced around could not have been the one on the very edge of the pit. There is alſo another conſideration: had the place of rendezvous been *cloſe* to the pit, Falſtaff muſt have diſcovered the plot ere it was ripe; but ſtanding a few paces off, with an old decayed tree intervening, the plot was comparatively ſafe from diſcovery. Do not all theſe conſiderations ſhow the late tree to have been the real one?

I am quite aware, that to this reaſoning ſome will

object, and ſay, the play was written to be performed on a ſtage, and therefore theſe minor points, as they may call them, are of no moment. I am quite aware the play was intended to be performed on the ſtage, and not in the Park at Windſor; nevertheleſs, I underſtand that Shakſpeare made himſelf acquainted with all the localities mentioned in the play, and acted it before a Windſor audience, and therefore believe that his good ſenſe would prompt him to adopt ſuch performances, as were moſt conſiſtent, with the peculiar features of the places repreſented.

There is one point which I have not touched upon, viz.:—

'And there he blaſts the tree.'

This expreſſion has induced many to ſuppoſe, that the tree muſt neceſſarily have been an old decayed one in Shakſpeare's time, and I confeſs that ſuppoſition is not unreaſonable, but cannot ſee that it was *neceſſary* for the tree to have been even an old one. If an old withered tree had been neceſſary, there muſt have been ſeveral at that period in the Park, that would have been more ſuitable than the maiden tree in that reſpect; but there was nothing remarkable in an old decayed

pollard, that it ſhould be ſet as a mark when all were pollards but one, and that a tree of noble proportions, as I ſhall ſhow the late tree to have been, even when Shakſpeare lived. This really was a remarkable object, ſuitable for being uſed as a landmark, eaſily diſtinguiſhed, and one on which the demon hunter may vent his malignant 'blaſt' with ſome effect; and the condition of which when it fell, really was ſuch as to warrant the ſuppoſition that decay had ſet in upon it at a very early date, perhaps even as far back as when '*Herne* the Hunter' walked 'round about' it.*

O enable the reader the better to perceive their relative merits, I here introduce ſketches of both trees. There having been no drawing made of the late Oak when in its

* Here I muſt inform the reader that, according to the uſual method of computing the age of trees, by the diameter, or girth, of their trunks, I have been informed by thoſe ſkilled in the matter, that the maiden tree muſt have lived about 600 years for it to attain the ſize it was when it fell; ſo that, conſidering its having been dead full forty years, and having ſhrunk conſiderably in ſize during that period, its age may ſafely be eſtimated at 650 years: ſo that it would have been about 300 years old at the period when Herne was ſuppoſed to exiſt in a bodily ſhape.

prime that has been made public, I have copied an engraving of it publiſhed by Mr. Jeſſe in *A*

Summer's Day at Windſor, in 1841. The drawing, though taken when the tree was perfectly lifeleſs, and

ſome of the lower branches off, nevertheleſs ſhows that it muſt have been a beautifully proportioned one, with a fine, full, noble head at one time: ſuch a tree as might well ſerve as a place of ſhelter in a ſtorm, or a place of repoſe for cattle. The other is a reduced copy of an engraving of the tree cut down in 1796,

from *Picturesque Views on the Thames*, publiſhed by Ireland in 1791.

The reader, I think, will acknowledge, that upon every point hitherto conſidered Shakſpeare's evidence is decidedly in favour of the maiden tree, if read fairly, and interpreted only by common ſenſe.

There are ſome people, I know, who think it was neceſſary for the tree to have been old and decayed from a long period previous to Shakſpeare, although he does not ſo repreſent it; and I am ſurpriſed to find ſuch an intelligent man as Mr. Charles Knight ſpeaking of it as an 'Oak with great ragg'd horns.'

It occurs thus:—Mr. Knight having deſcribed his earlieſt recollections of the locality in which Herne's Oak ſtood, ſays,—'Five or ſix years later we came to look for the "Oak with great ragg'd horns," to which we had been introduced by Shakſpeare.'* This rendering of the paſſage is calculated to lead any careleſs reader into error, which every one who has read the play muſt perceive. I will juſt introduce the ſentence which, ſpeaking of Herne's performance, runs thus,—

'Walke round about an Oake, with great rag'd-hornes;'

of courſe meaning the 'hornes' are on the head of Herne, and not on the Oak. Mr. Knight's is therefore a glaring miſquotation, and renders his evidence on this ſubject of very doubtful quality, which otherwiſe would be extremely valuable.

* *See* Knight's *Pictorial Shakſpeare*, Comedies, vol. i., end of Act v.

I have ſome ſuſpicion that this looking for *horns in the Oak* has miſled others in their judgment on the ſubject, and cauſed the falſe impreſſion which ſome have entertained; but the reader will perceive that Shakſpeare does not even ſay *old* Oak, or *great* Oak with 'rag'd-hornes;' it is ſimply an *Oak* which the hunter 'walks round about' and '*blaſts*,' not *has blaſted*;—if already blaſted, there would be no need of blaſting it ſtill further: but if a fine, flouriſhing tree, then the blaſting would be performed to ſome purpoſe.

We now paſs on to the reign of William III.

I AM not aware of any exiſting documents which ſtate the preciſe date, but all intereſted in the ſubject agree, that in the reign of that monarch the avenue of Elms was planted in which Herne's Oak (as I ſhall call it) ſtood; the advocates of this tree take its being allowed to remain when the avenue was planted as an evidence in its favour; and Mr. Jeſſe (formerly Surveyor of the Parks), in his *Scenes and Occupations of Country Life*, publiſhed 1853, ſpeaks thus on the ſubject:—

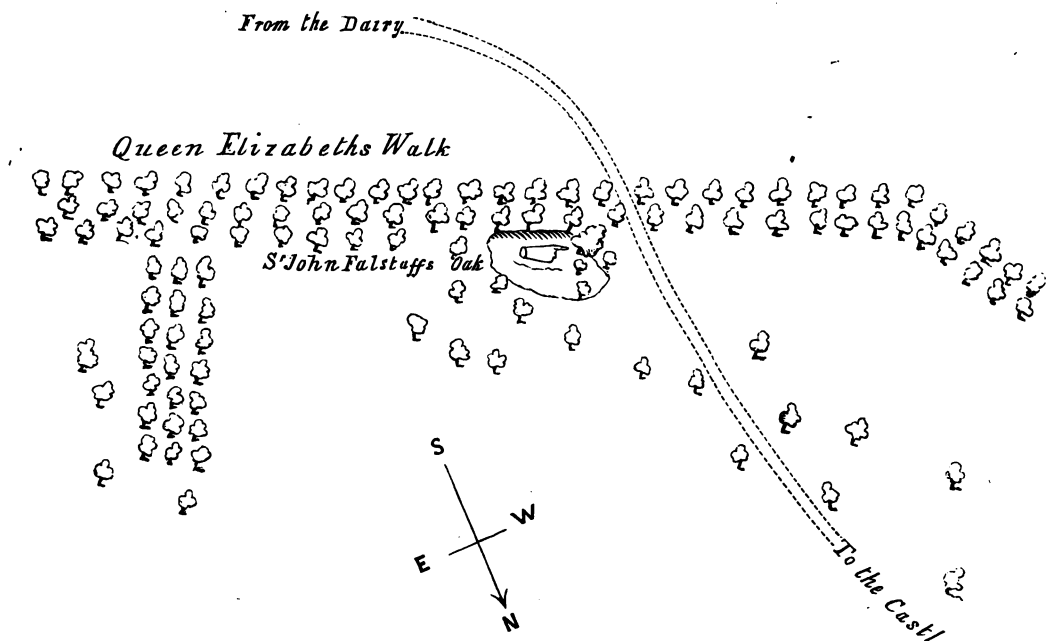
'The avenue was planted by King William III., who delighted in ſtraight lines; and all the avenues he made were formed ſo, except this, which is diſtorted, evidently with the intention of introducing Herne's Oak into it.'

And this ſtatement its opponents have never been able to gainſay: therefore, I think we may fairly take that as an evidence incontrovertible, in its favour.

THE next evidence is a Plan of the Caſtle and Parks, publiſhed at Eton, in 1742, by W. Collier. The poſition of the tree is there pointed out, by a hand, and it is called 'Sir John Falſtaff's Oak;' but different opinions have been formed upon this plan, and I confeſs at the firſt glance it does appear to be againſt the late tree. Its opponents make of this plan a bulwark, but Mr. Jeſſe conſiders it an evidence in its favour,* and I think we cannot do better than introduce a copy of that portion wherein the tree is repreſented.

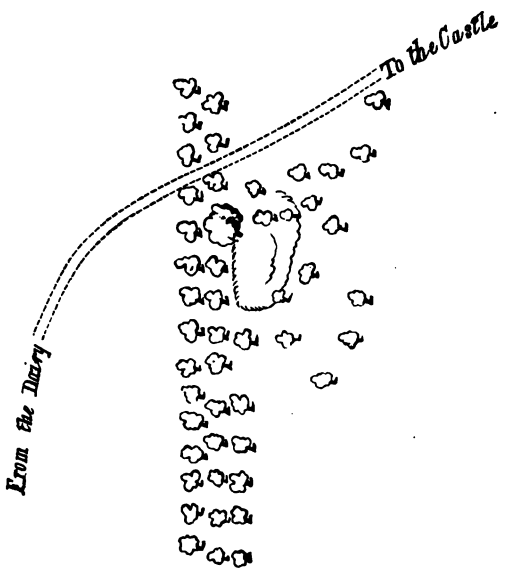
Here the reader will note that the hand or index points to a tree a little *outſide*, and not *in* the avenue: this is the point dilated upon by thoſe who hold the tree cut down in 1796 to be the real one. But if it were ſo, where is the late tree in the plan? And why not diſtinguiſhed from the Elms there? It muſt be borne in mind, that the Elms were planted not more than forty or fifty years before the plan was formed, while the late tree was at that time at leaſt 500 years old. The Oak was evidently regarded by William III., and ought to have been diſtinguiſhed from the Elms by Collier, if he did not mean that to which he attached Sir John Falſtaff's name.

* See *Scenes and Occupations of Country Life*, publiſhed 1853.



From Collier's *Plan*, publiſhed at Eton in 1742.

1, 2 Elms in the Avenue.
3 Herne's Oak.
4 The ſuppoſititious Oak ſtanding on the edge of the pit.



Plan ſhowing the preciſe poſition of Herne's Oak, and its relative proportion as compared with the Elms, when Collier's map was made in 1742, and the probability of its being the one meant by him.

C

THERE introduce a ſketch and plan which, I think, would have ſhown the relative ſizes of the Oak and Elms when Collier's plan was formed. I have aſcertained upon the authority of Mr. Ingram, that this tree did not ſtand preciſely in a line with the Elms. When planted, the Elms ſeemed to have been put in a line with the inner part of the baſe of the Oak's trunk, conſequently it projected ſeveral feet from the avenue *outwards*, towards the pit; beſides this, the reader will perceive by the drawing, page 10, it leaned outwards, and I believe the plan here introduced would ſhow its true poſition, as well as proportion, in 1742; and this gives a good reaſon for ſuppoſing that Collier meant that tree in the one he pointed out. The figure he gives, too, is that of a tree with a fine noble head, which the one cut down in 1796 certainly could not boaſt of in 1742.

It may be objected that this is reaſoning on trifles; Collier perhaps only uſed the figure as a type, and was indifferent what form the tree was of. If ſo, may he not have been as indifferent in the preciſe poſition of it? Granting that Collier meant the old pollard, who is to ſhow that he was right, and William III. wrong? Did he, too, ſee the 'horns' in it, as Mr. Knight did?

I think Collier's plan furniſhes the advocates of the late tree with quite as good grounds for ſtanding upon its authority as it does its opponents. It is a pity, however, that he was not a little more preciſe in his noting down the poſitions of trees. If any one take the trouble to walk in the Park, with Collier's plan in their hand, they will perceive that he is very inaccurate in that particular. There are ſome which muſt have been very large ones 150 years ago, which he gives not the leaſt indication of; then, is it fair to inſiſt upon his being ſo very accurate in the poſition he has choſen to give this one?

For my own part, I regard Collier's plan as a two-edged ſword, capable of being uſed in oppoſite directions, as dangerous to the bearer as to the opponent, and as not to be relied upon any further than to ſhow that thereabout Herne's Oak ſtood.

AFTER Collier's plan, next in ſucceſſion, I believe, of documentary evidence, is Ireland's *Picturesque Views on the Thames*, publiſhed in 1791.

Ireland is a non-believer in our Herne's Oak. He furniſhes us with an engraving of the one ſtanding on

the edge of the pit, by ſome ſuppoſed to be the real one; he gives us ſome inſight into the hiſtory of Herne, and ſpeaking of him ſays:—

'The ſtory of this Herne, who was a keeper in the foreſt in the time of Elizabeth, runs thus:—That having committed ſome great offence, for which he feared to loſe his ſituation and fall into diſgrace, he was induced to hang himſelf on this tree. The credulity of the times eaſily worked on the minds of the ignorant to ſuppoſe that his ghoſt ſhould haunt the ſpot. This rendered it a fit ſcene of action for the purpoſe of our Bard, to terrify and expoſe the cowardice of the fat Knight, who, in the following ſpeech, confirms the idea of Herne's ghoſt being ſuppoſed to walk near this place, and is even deſirous of imitating the keeper's voice,—

' "Divide me like a bribe-buck, each a haunch,
I will keep my ſides to myſelf, my ſhoulders for the fellow of this walk,
And my horns I bequeath your huſbands.
Am I a woodman? Ha! Speak I like Herne the Hunter?"

'Some idea has prevailed of an intention to cut down this celebrated tree, which it is much to be wiſhed may not be true. The dell near it has in part been recently filled up,' &c.

Beſides the engraving in Ireland's work, other drawings were made of this tree by various artiſts, viz.

Paul Sandby, Mr. Anderſon, the Rev. Mr. Howman of Henley-on-Thames, Mr. Thornton, and Mr. Ralph Weſt, ſon of the painter, Benjamin Weſt, afterwards Sir Benjamin.

The evidence of ſeveral other perſons has been given in favour of this tree, natives and reſidents in the neighbourhood. The Rev. Mr. Howman, however, acknowledges that there were two opinions, but that the beſt-informed perſons were decidedly ſatisfied that the tree ſketched by him was that deſcribed by Shakſpeare, and that ſuch was the general belief.

NOTWITHSTANDING all the evidence in favour of this tree, in 1796 it was cut down, without any attempt being, or having been, made to prevent its deſtruction. What idea does this ſtrange conduct on the part of the believers in the identity of this tree convey to any reflective mind? Unqueſtionably this: that thoſe whoſe opinions are thus paraded were few in compariſon to others who did not believe in it, and that the faith of thoſe who profeſſed a belief was weak and wavering. It muſt be borne in mind, that the deſtruction of this tree was not unpremeditated: we read in Ireland, 1791, that at that

time 'ſome idea prevailed of an intention to cut it down,'—how much earlier its condemnation dated he does not ſay; it is ſufficient for us that five years elapſed from the time it became publicly known to be doomed before it was felled, and during all that period not one of its moſt ardent believers made a ſingle ſign, nor did one of its moſt able advocates utter a ſound, to ſtay the deſtroying hand. At length the appointed hour came—the axe was laid at its root; it fell with a craſh, was conveyed to a lumber-yard, conſigned to oblivion, and ſo the 'Oake, with great rag'd-horns,' became a thing of the paſt.

WE paſs on now to the period when a diſcuſſion aroſe on the queſtion whether the real Herne's Oak of Shakſpeare was cut down, or ſtill ſtanding. And I think we cannot do better than avail ourſelves of Tighe and Davis's aſſiſtance, in the *Annals of Windſor*. In that work, the pith of all that has been ſaid againſt Herne's Oak (I mean, that which fell in 1863) is brought together in a conciſe and intelligible manner, and I purpoſe taking the leading points in ſucceſſion as they occur therein.

After giving an outline of the tradition, the reaſon of its intereſt to us, and the introduction of witneſſes previous to 1796, to which I have already alluded, they ſay,—

'That Herne's Oak is no longer in exiſtence ſeems beyond all reaſonable doubt. It ſtood in the Little Park, on the right of the footpath which, until very recently, led from Windſor to Datchet. Its preciſe poſition is pointed out in Collier's map of the Little Park, and therein called Sir John Falſtaff's Oak.'

Collier's map I have already treated on, to which the reader can refer, p. 16.

'It ſtood at the edge of a pit, or depreſſed part of ground, and outſide the avenue of trees. This correſponds exactly with the ſtatements of the poſition of the tree by thoſe who can ſtill recollect it, that it ſtood about ſix yards outſide the preſent north row of the avenue, and upon the very edge of the pit.'

This ſtatement of the poſition of the tree deſtroyed in 1796 I have no wiſh to deny; but this tree, '*ſtanding on the very edge of the pit*,' rendered it ineligible for the performance introduced by Shakſpeare around Herne's Oak, and, in my opinion, condemns it; or it ſtands as a beacon of inconſiſtency in the play invented by our poet. Surely other figures would have ſuggeſted themſelves to his fertile mind, as being more natural and conſiſtent, than joining hands at midnight, and dancing round a tree in a poſition ſo inappropriate for ſuch a performance!

'The Oak was much decayed, and hollow, but bore acorns as late as 1783, and was alive in 1788, and had a ſmall portion of foliage: in the following year it put forth a few leaves, and in 1790 it ceaſed to vegetate.'

All this is intereſting to thoſe who believe in its

identity, and is a proof that it was taken particular notice of by ſome.

'A correſpondent of Dr. Bromet ſays, when a ſinging-boy at Windſor, in 1786, he often got into the old hollow tree, called "Herne's Oak" by his father, a native of Datchet.'

This is not improbable, and is, perhaps, only another inſtance of calling a tree by a wrong name on the *father's* part; but in 1796 this ſinging-boy (of ten years previous) muſt have become a man: why did he not raiſe his muſical voice to charm away the deſtroyer from his venerable friend *before* its fall, inſtead of giving his teſtimony afterwards? This would have been more conſiſtent.

'It was cut down in the ſpring of 1796, moſt ſeriouſly to the regret of all who were intereſted in the ſubject. It was underſtood at the time that George the Third had directed all the trees in the Little Park to be numbered, and upon the repreſentation of the bailiff, whoſe name was Robinſon, that certain trees were dead, and incumbered the ground, a general order was given to cut them down, and Herne's Oak was among the condemned.'

'Benjamin Weſt, the Preſident of the Royal Academy, was at Windſor at the time, and took great intereſt in the ſubject. He traced the Oak to the ſpot where it was conveyed, and obtained a large piece of one of its knotty arms,

which Mr. Delamotte, the Profeſſor of Drawing to the Royal Military College, Sandhurſt, and formerly a pupil of Mr. Weſt, ſtates that he has often ſeen. Other perſons alſo obtained relics of its hard, dark wood.'

'A correſpondent of Dr. Bromet ſtates that his father, as foreman in the Park, aſſiſted in cutting down and grubbing up the tree.'

I have no wiſh to diſpute the King's giving a general order for cutting down old trees, eſpecially the one in queſtion, but purpoſe bringing evidence to corroborate that ſtatement as far as regards this particular one. As to Mr. Benjamin Weſt obtaining a piece of the tree, it is very natural he ſhould 'take an intereſt in the ſubject,' ſeeing that a drawing was made of it by his ſon not long before it was cut down; but the *wonder* is, that if its *being cut down* was '*moſt ſeriouſly to the regret of all who were intereſted in the ſubject*,' that none of the names of theſe '*ſeriouſly-regretting*' people have ever been mentioned as having cared to ſave any portion of the tree. Where were all the '*beſt-informed perſons*' deſcribed by the Rev. Mr. Howman—all the nobility and gentry of the neighbourhood—all who took an intereſt in Shakſpeare's play (and who does not in Windſor?), that not one of

them is mentioned as having cared a jot what became of it when it was cut down, any more than that they ever attempted to prevent its being deſtroyed? Surely ſuch a mixture of '*ſerious regret*' and *utter indifference* is without a parallel in the *Annals of Windſor*, and is the ſtrongeſt proof that the '*beſt-informed perſons*' did not believe in the identity of this old tree.

It is ſtated that various tea-caddies and other ſmall articles were made from the remains of it. Here there ſeems to be a little confounding of this tree with a ſubſequent windfall, for in the *Gentleman's Magazine* we read,—

'Soon after the circumſtances referred to took place (*i. e.* the felling the oak on the edge of the pit), three large old oak-trees were blown down in a gale of wind in the Little Park, and one of them was ſuppoſed by perſons, who probably took little trouble to inquire into the real facts of the caſe, to have been Herne's Oak. This windfall was cut up into ſmall pieces, and ſold to carpenters and cabinet-makers in the neighbourhood, who found it very profitable in calling the articles they made a part of Herne's Oak, and diſpoſing of them as Shakſperian *reliquæ*.'*

It is, however, ſtated by Mr. Jeſſe, in his *Scenes and*

* See *Gentleman's Magazine*, New Series, vol. xi. pp. 48–9.

Occupations of Country Life, on the authority of Mr. Engall, that—

'Some *chairs* were made from the ſuppoſititious Herne's Oak, and preſented to the King as intereſting relics of that tree; but His Majeſty *refuſed to accept them, ſtating that Herne's Oak was ſtill ſtanding.*'

The ſame authority further ſays, that—

'Many things alſo were made from the tree, and ſold to various perſons in the neighbourhood, which left the impreſſion that Herne's Oak had been felled.'

All this, however, only confirms my previous argument, that among all the rank, wealth, and intelligence of the neighbourhood, or, indeed, of the whole kingdom, not one name appears as evidence but that of Mr. Benjamin Weſt. My concluſion is therefore fully juſtified, that it could not have been the tree moſt popularly, earneſtly, and intelligently believed in, notwithſtanding the evidence in its ſupport. The man's evidence who ſays his father aſſiſted in cutting down and grubbing up the tree is nothing to the point at iſſue.

They (Tighe and Davis) go on to ſay,—

'The teſtimony here adduced as to the poſition and fate

of Herne's Oak has been confirmed by many former inhabitants and viſitors of Windſor, ſome of whom are ſtill living. Among thoſe who either recollected the tree and its preciſe locality, or who received the account from others at the time, were Mr. Francis Nicholſon, the artiſt; Dr. Lind, many years a phyſician at Windſor, and F.A.S.; Biſhop Goodenough, ſome time a Canon of Windſor, and F.A.S.; Colonel Rooke, a reſident in Windſor Caſtle; Dr. Fiſher, Biſhop of Saliſbury, formerly a Canon of Windſor; Mr. Bethel, the preſent Burſar of Eton College; Mr. Secker, Clerk of the Peace,' &c.

The poſition and fate of the tree, by ſome ſuppoſititiouſly called Herne's Oak, I do not queſtion at all; and if any of thoſe gentlemen enumerated, or their informants, were believers in its identity, and living at the time the tree was cut down, to them apply my previous remarks on their inconſiſtency, ſupineneſs, and practical diſbelief.

Speaking of the late tree, Tighe and Davis ſay,—

'This tree is eaſily recognized; it is now quite dead, and is the only oak in the avenue, for all the other trees are elms.'

This, of courſe, is a proof that ſome *peculiar intereſt* or *value* was attached to it by William III., who planted the avenue, or the avenue would not have

been conſtructed ſo as to retain it. In fact, it would almoſt ſeem that the avenue was planted to inſure its preſervation, from the manner in which it was distorted on this oak's account.

Then again they ſay,—

'The drawings of Herne's Oak already mentioned repreſent the tree as a pollard, *i.e.* that its top had been lopped at ſome time. This is the caſe with all the very old trees in the vicinity of the Dell in the Little Park, while the falſe oak is a maiden tree, as will be ſeen by reference to the woodcut at the end of this chapter.'

At the end of the chapter is the woodcut referred to, and the print annexed, after a beautiful drawing by Mr. Stark, gives a repreſentation very ſimilar, and has been pronounced by Mr. Ingram as the beſt drawing of Herne's Oak that he has ſeen.

To account for the marked difference between the two repreſentations of Herne's Oak at pages 10 and 31, I muſt here inform the reader that early in the year 1841 an elm-tree fell upon its branches, and it was thereby much altered in appearance;* but if the two trunks are compared together, the ſimilarity will

* See *Gentleman's Magazine*, New Series, vol. xv. p. 374.

Herne's Oak, after Drawing by Mr. Stark.

be found ſo great, as to leave no doubt, that both the drawings repreſent the ſame tree, although taken at different periods, and in oppoſite directions.

They proceed,—

'The old trees were lopped in the winter ſeaſon, and the boughs given to the deer to feed upon the bark when the ground was covered with ſnow. This practice was of courſe diſcontinued, in regard at leaſt to the trees in the vicinity of the Caſtle, as ſoon as they were valued for their ornamental character, and therefore we may fairly aſſume all the pollard oaks in the Little Park to be of conſiderable antiquity, and the ſolitary maiden oak, and the elms forming the avenue, to be of comparatively recent growth. The falſe tree is not of any great ſize, and it was alive in 1796, when the real tree was cut down.'

'This tree is of ſmall girth compared with the other trees about it. It is not more than fifteen feet in circumference at the largeſt part, while there is a magnificent oak at about two hundred yards' diſtance, whoſe girth is nearly thirty feet.'*

It is here admitted beyond doubt that Herne's Oak (as I ſhall continue to call it) was the only maiden tree in the vicinity of the Dell, and the reaſon aſſigned

* Theſe particulars have been taken from Knight's *Pictorial Shakſpeare*, Comedies, vol. i.

for the other trees being lopped in the winter ſeaſon is very feaſible; but as to the *fairneſs* of *aſſuming* that the maiden tree was of *comparatively recent growth*, I do not *doubt*, but *deny*. Of courſe my denial reſts on the aſſumption that the only fair way of computing the age of trees is by means of their comparative girths,* ſome allowance being made for additional bulk commonly attained by pollards through lopping.

Now for the compariſon of ſizes.

UPON ſeeing the ſtatement above, I applied to Mr. Ingram at the Royal Gardens, Windſor, for the girth of Herne's Oak. Mr. George Ingram, who aſſiſted in directing the cutting up of the tree, informed me that the average diameter at the baſe was 6 ft. 6 in. This makes a circumference of 20 ft. 5 in. Not ſatisfied with this, I went

* Some have attempted to eſtimate the age of trees by counting the rings in the end of their trunks, and in ſome caſes they have ſucceeded; but I am not aware that that method has ever been found to anſwer with reſpect to very old trees.

to the Royal Gardens, and having obtained permiſſion, was kindly accompanied and aſſiſted by Mr. George Ingram in taking the girths of all the old pollard oaks around the Dell, which I found to be as follows: viz. 22 ft., 21 ft., 19 ft., 18 ft. 6 in., 18 ft., 17 ft., 14 ft., and 11 ft. 3 in. I applied the tape to the lower parts of the trunks, at a convenient height while ſtanding—about 4 ft. from the ground. I aſked Mr. Ingram if he could point out one about the ſize he ſhould think Herne's Oak would have been when the bark was on, and the tree in its prime. He conducted me to the one which meaſured 21 ft. at 4 ft. from the ground, ſaying that, in his opinion, it would have been juſt about the ſize of that one.

Our opponents allow the maiden tree to have been 15 ft. around, which with the bark would have made it juſt about 17 ft.* We will now ſuppoſe Mr. George Ingram, being a believer in this tree, to have been favourably diſpoſed, and to have eſtimated it as far above its real ſize as its opponents did below it;

* This is not taking into account that not only was the tree barkleſs, but the *ſap* of the trunk was alſo waſted away to a great extent, and in ſome places entirely, by time and expoſure.

we will, therefore, take the mean of the two eſtimates as a criterion, viz. :—

Mr. G. Ingram's.....	21 feet.
Opponents'.....	17 „
Mean circumference.....	19 „

Compare this with the girths of the pollards, viz. :—

	ft.	in.
	22	0
	21	0
	19	0
	18	6
	18	0
	17	0
	14	0
	11	3
Divide by the number of trees 8)	140	9
	17	7

Thus we ſee that 17 ft. 7 in. is the average girth of all the old pollards around or very near the Dell—ſcarcely above the eſtimate given by the opponents ; and the reader will perceive that the

majority of theſe are below 19 ft., the mean of the two oppoſing eſtimates. We have no need, therefore, to take into account the fact, which is patent to every foreſter or farm-labourer, that lopping trees makes the trunks grow larger than they otherwiſe would. *Apropos* to this, every gardener knows that by pruning off ſome parts of trees, what remains of them grow more vigorouſly; and every one at all acquainted with timber is aware, that forty years' expoſure of a lifeleſs and barkleſs trunk to the tender mercies of the 'fretful elements,' would conſiderably diminiſh its ſize in the proceſs of drying. But we have other evidence as to the ſize of Herne's Oak, which Mr. Jeſſe gives us in his *Scenes and Occupations of Country Life.* He ſays:—

'Mr. Gilpin, in his work on Foreſt Scenery, tells us that Herne's Oak is ſtill ſuppoſed to exiſt.' He adds that, 'In the Little Park at Windſor there is a walk, known by the name of "Queen Elizabeth's Walk." It conſiſts of elms, among which is a ſingle oak taken into the row, as if particularly meant to be diſtinguiſhed at the time when the walk or avenue was made. It is a large tree, meaſuring twenty-four feet in circumference.

'In conſequence of this ſtatement' (Mr. Jeſſe goes on to ſay), 'I cauſed the tree to be meaſured by a reſpectable

carpenter accuſtomed to meaſure timber. He tells me that it girts at the end of the trunk 21 feet, and that, allowing for the bark which was on it in the year 1792 or 1793, when Mr. Gilpin wrote his account, it would have had a girth of 23 feet at leaſt; ſo nearly does it agree with Mr. Gilpin's ſtatement, which, by the way, was written ſome years before either Mr. Delamotte or Mr. Nicholſon drew the ſuppoſititious oak already referred to. The preſent tree muſt, therefore, once have been a very large and noble one' (Mr. Jeſſe goes on), 'compared with the girth of two or three near it. It is now ſeen to diſadvantage, but it ſhould be recollected that theſe other trees are pollards, and the very circumſtance of trees having been deprived of their leading branches through a ſucceſſion of years, which has not been the caſe with Herne's Oak, always increaſes the ſize of their trunks.'

This altogether corroborates my previous ſtatement, and it needs no comment of mine to convince the reader that a peculiar value was attached to, or intereſt taken in that tree, from a very diſtant period—a period *antecedent* to the *lopping* of *all the other oaks* in the vicinity.

Tighe and Davis proceeding, ſay—'The claims of the exiſting tree to be called Herne's Oak are founded on the following circumſtances': —

FIRST. That George III. denied that the real tree was cut down, and pointed out the preſent as the real Herne's Oak; and, moreover, gave particular orders to Mr. Engall, the then Bailiff and Manager of Windſor Little Park, to preſerve it; and that George IV. aſſerted that the tree which was cut down was not Herne's Oak.

SECOND. The ſuppoſed ſtatements and opinions of the late Sir Herbert Taylor, Sir David Dundas, and the former and preſent Bailiffs of the Little Park, and their labourers, and of ſome inhabitants of Windſor.

THIRD. That the avenue in the Little Park is narrower towards the weſt end, whence it has been inferred that it was conſtructed in order to take in this tree as part of it, and that this was a proof that William III., who planted the avenue, preferred diſtorting it to cutting it down.'

They proceed to ſay,—

'The firſt argument is conſiderably weakened by the following ſtatement of Mr. Francis Nicholſon, the artiſt, as communicated to Mr. Crofton Croker:—About the year 1800 he was on a viſit to the Dowager Ducheſs of Kingſton, at Old Windſor, and his mornings were chiefly employed in making ſtudies of old trees in the foreſt. This circumſtance

one day led the converſation of ſome viſitors of Lady Kingſton's to Herne's Oak. Mrs. Bonfry and her daughter, Lady Ely, were preſent, and as they were much with the royal family, Mr. Nicholſon requeſted Lady Ely to procure for him any information that ſhe could from the King reſpecting Herne's Oak, which, conſidering the King's tenacious memory and familiarity with Windſor, the King could probably give better than any one elſe. In a very few days Lady Ely informed Mr. Nicholſon that ſhe had made the inquiry he wiſhed of the King, who told her that when he (George III.) was a young man, it was repreſented to him that there were a number of old oaks in the Park which had become unſightly objects, and that it would be deſirable to take them down. He gave immediate directions that ſuch trees as were of this deſcription ſhould be removed; but he was afterwards ſorry that he had given ſuch an order inadvertently, becauſe he found that among the reſt the remains of Herne's Oak had been deſtroyed.'

This laſt ſtatement contains its own condemnation; for if the King had given *immediate directions* for a lot of old oaks to be removed *when he was a young man*, no doubt *that order would have been carried out before he became fifty-eight years of age.* This is prepoſterous. If a lot of old oaks had been taken down together, Herne's Oak being among them, how is it we have never heard from any other ſource, that others were

taken down at the ſame time as that on the edge of the pit? According to all other evidence given, the ſuppoſititious Herne's Oak was taken down alone; and we have evidence corroborative of this given by Mr. Davis, the late Royal Huntſman, in Jeſſe's *Scenes and Occupations of Country Life*, as follows:—

'King George III. frequently aſſerted that he had cut down an oak-tree at the edge of the pit, cloſe to the preſent tree, becauſe many perſons confounded it with the tree growing in the avenue, and called it Herne's Oak, which he ſaid it was not.'

Mr. Jeſſe ſays, 'I have this anecdote from Mr. Davis, the very popular and intelligent Huntſman of her Majeſty's Staghounds, and who it is well known was in the habit, when a very young man, of being conſtantly in attendance upon his Majeſty George the Third.'

A circumſtance is mentioned in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, New Series, vol. xi. pp. 48, 49, which ſays (Mr. Jeſſe):—

'The ſtory to which the *Quarterly Review* expreſſes of a tree having been cut down by order of George III. when in a ſtate of excitement is well known, and was repeated by George IV., who always added, "That tree was ſuppoſed to have been Herne's Oak, but it was not." The perſon is ſtill alive who heard the order given by George III. to fell a tree

in the Little Park, about which ſome angry words had paſſed with the Prince of Wales, and he aſſures me that the tree was an elm. The whole character ot George III. guaranteed that Herne's Oak was not cut down by his order.'

And in my opinion the probability is, that this latter ſtory became in ſome way mixed up with the former one, and hence aroſe the miſtaken report of Lady Ely to Mr. Nicholſon.

As to inadvertency or miſtake, I have already ſhown that *the ſuppoſititious tree was publicly known to be doomed for five years before it was cut down*, therefore there is not the remoteſt ſhade of probability in Lady Ely's ſtatement; and the fact that no attempt was ever made to ſave it during all that time, is a poſitive proof of its ſpuriouſneſs.

I will now lay before the reader the ſubſtance of Mr. Engall's ſtatement by Mr. Jeſſe in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, before mentioned:—

'He (Mr. Engall) ſtates that he was appointed Bailiff and Manager of Windſor Home Park by George III., about forty years ago' (this being in 1839, therefore it would be about 1799). 'On receiving his appointment he was directed to attend upon the King at the Caſtle, and on arriving there he found his Majeſty with the old Lord Winchelſea. After a

little delay the King ſet off to walk in the Park, attended by Lord Winchelſea, and Mr. Engall was deſired to follow them. Nothing was ſaid to him until the King ſtopped oppoſite an oak-tree. He then turned to Mr. Engall and ſaid, "I have brought you here to point out this tree to you. I commit it to your eſpecial charge, and take care that no damage is ever done to it. I had rather that every tree in the Park ſhould be cut down than that this tree ſhould be hurt. *This is Herne's Oak.*"

'Mr. Engall added, that this was the tree ſtill ſtanding near Queen Elizabeth's Walk, and is the ſame tree which (ſays Mr. Jeſſe) I have mentioned and given a ſketch of in my *Gleanings in Natural Hiſtory.*'

'Having ſtated the above fact, I may add that George III. was perfectly incapable of the duplicity of having pointed out a tree to Mr. Engall as Herne's Oak, if he had previouſly ordered the real Herne's Oak—the "Simon Pure"—to be cut down. I have alſo the authority of one of the members of the preſent Royal family for ſtating that George III. always mentioned the tree now ſtanding as Herne's Oak.'

Tighe and Davis make reference to the malady with which the King was unhappily afflicted as a reaſon for queſtioning the evidence of Mr. Engall, but as fourteen years elapſed from the time the ſuppoſititious tree was taken down before his Majeſty became unfitted for the performance of his public duties, and as, during all that time, he was never known to waver in

any of his ſtatements with regard to Herne's Oak, there is no room for having a doubt on that head. Moreover, in the ſtatement made by thoſe oppoſed to the maiden tree of an occurrence in 1800, there is this remarkable paſſage, viz. :—

'Mr. Nicholſon requeſted Lady Ely to procure for him any information ſhe could from the King reſpecting Herne's Oak, which, *conſidering the King's tenacious memory, and familiarity with Windſor, the King could probably give better than any one elſe.*'

This occurred ten years before his Majeſty's incapacity commenced; and having this admiſſion as to the value of his evidence, and having evidence as to his uniformly ſtraightforward conduct, there can be no doubt that his Majeſty poſſeſſed the beſt information on the ſubject, and never gave it in two oppoſite ways, but always in favour of the maiden tree.

They proceed to ſay :—

'In anſwer to the argument drawn from the ſtatement of certain other perſons, it is to be obſerved that not one of theſe ſtatements was made at the time the real tree was in exiſtence. They have all ariſen ſince its deſtruction, and great allowance muſt be made for a natural and praiſeworthy wiſh to keep ſuch an intereſting memorial in exiſtence, and the conſequent

bias on the judgment arising from that circumstance. The assertions of park-keepers and labourers, moreover, as has been observed, should be cautiously received, for reasons which will be sufficiently apparent.'

The inaccuracy of the former part of this statement is made manifest by that of Mr. Gilpin, who, in the year 1792 or 1793, made mention of it in his work on *Forest Scenery* (*see* p. 36). He spoke of the maiden tree as the real oak, and has furnished us with its circumference at that time. The Rev. Mr. Howman (*see* p. 21) acknowledges that there were two opinions before the tree was taken down in 1796. Mr. Jesse, in his *Scenes and Occupations of Country Life*, published in 1853, tells us,—

'The evidence of some old inhabitants of Windsor, especially of one in the ninety-fourth year of her age, who assured me that not only they, but their fathers and mothers also, have always had the present tree pointed out to them as Herne's Oak. This,' he says, 'is going back to the time of William III.'

And again, in *A Summer Day at Windsor*, published 1841, he is more expressive still, and says that—

'*Many* old inhabitants of Windsor look upon it as the real Herne's Oak, and bear their testimony to their fathers and *grandfathers* having done so before them.'

I COULD cite other old witneſſes on this point, and many ſubſequent ones, ſome that I have inquired of myſelf, but feel that the error is laid ſo bare before the reader that further teſtimony is ſcarcely needed. I could mention Sir Herbert Taylor, Sir David Dundas, and others, but ſhall limit myſelf to two more witneſſes of my own, one of whom has been already mentioned, viz. Mr. Charles Davis, the late Royal Huntſman, whom, in the ſummer of 1864, I viſited for the purpoſe of obtaining his evidence in perſon. I was very cordially received, and after ſome general remarks the ſubject of Herne's Oak was introduced. Mr. Davis ſaid that 'he had lived the firſt twenty-five years of his life within two hundred yards of the tree, and had never entertained a doubt but that the one in the avenue was the real Herne's Oak. When a young man he uſed frequently to walk about the Dell reading Shakſpeare, and imagining to himſelf the imps and elves which were deſcribed in the play. He had at that time not only heard George III., but George IV., and other members of the Royal family, call it Herne's Oak, and many other people, though there were ſome that doubted it.'

Upon my aſking the reaſon why ſome doubted, he replied, that 'he believed the report that the real tree was cut down had been got up chiefly to annoy the King, by ſome perſons knowing his Majeſty very much valued it.' Mr. Davis was, at the time I viſited him, about ſeventy-five or ſeventy-ſix years of age.

The other witneſs is John Ruſſell, whom I ſaw about the ſame period, and who was then about ſeventy-four years of age, and living at the entrance to Frogmore, in the Long Walk. He told me that 'he had lived thereabout the whole of his life, and had been employed at the dairy ever ſince a little boy; that he and his father had both been under the employ of the Royal family, and that their ſervices united amounted to more than a hundred years. In ſpeaking of the tree which lately ſtood in the avenue, he told me that he had heard both his father and grandfather ſay it was Herne's Oak, and had known an old carpenter, who uſed to come from the Great Park ſometimes to repair the palings, ſay the ſame, and many other people, beſides the Royal family. He had heard George III. and George IV., and King William, ſay it was Herne's Oak, and the Princeſſes alſo. King George III., he ſaid, always ſeemed very proud of it;

and he remembered its bearing very fine acorns, and before the tree died ſome of them were gathered by order of the King, who ſent them ſomewhere to be planted, but he could not recollect exactly where.'

OF courſe theſe evidences come under the ban of '*ſhould be cautiouſly received, for reaſons which will be ſufficiently apparent*,'—becauſe the witneſſes were ſervants of the Crown; however, as evidence has been introduced unheſitatingly on the oppoſite ſide, voluntarily given by an *ex*-ſervant of the Royal family, who, becauſe his father was employed in cutting down and grubbing up an old tree, ſeemed to delight in the fancied deſtruction wrought (I refer to the witneſs mentioned by Dr. Bromet*), I do not think it fair to treat with indifference ſuch evidence as the foregoing, merely becauſe it came from thoſe who ſeemed to feel a '*natural and praiſeworthy*' delight in ſuch an '*intereſting memorial*' having been '*kept in exiſtence*.' And there is a '*ſufficiently apparent reaſon*' why the evidence of '*park-keepers and labourers*,' &c. ſhould not be diſreſpected, when we conſider that the

* *See* page 26.

enacter of the tragedy which gave riſe to the tradition was (according to received accounts) formerly a *keeper in the foreſt.* The *keepers* were the moſt likely perſons to have firſt diſcovered the ſuicide, and they would, moſt naturally, point out to their fellows and ſucceſſors the *real tree* from which the hunter was ſuſpended. Theſe men having had uninterrupted intercourſe with one another day by day, from age to age, ſucceſſively, ſurely ought to be the very moſt '*reliable witneſſes.*' Did the teſtimony in favour of the maiden tree reſt only on the evidence of the bailiffs, keepers, and other royal ſervants, given ſince the ſuppoſititious tree was cut down, ſome doubt of veracity may be attached to their ſtatements; but we have ſeen otherwiſe, and, I truſt, have a juſt appreciation of the author of that inſinuation againſt their teſtimony thus adopted by Tighe and Davis, who was the chief antagoniſt in former diſcuſſions, and I will give the reader a very brief ſummary of his proceedings.

A diſcourteous attack having been made on Mr. Jeſſe in the *Quarterly Review*, for an opinion on Herne's Oak which he had publiſhed, ſome one, under the title of 'Plantagenet,' in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, came forward, and at firſt advocated Mr. Jeſſe's cauſe;

afterwards, having ſeen Collier's Map, he turned round againſt Mr. Jeſſe, and then, not being able either to ſilence that gentleman's arguments, or ſhake his faith, became enraged, and ſtyled him 'an *Itinerant Deputy-Surveyor* of Woods and Works;' and, after taking his ſtand againſt Mr. Jeſſe on Collier's Map, he then looked about the Little Park, and diſcovered two or three other trees, which he thought quite as likely to be the real ones as the tree he had been previouſly advocating.

This wavering advocate, Tighe and Davis inform us, is Dr. Bromet; but what particular kind of doctor they do not ſay—whether of philoſophy, faith, or phyſic; and it is but juſtice to ſay that theſe gentlemen rebuke the fickle Doctor very properly, for the latter part of his conduct, in firſt uſing Collier's Map againſt Mr. Jeſſe, and then throwing it altogether overboard: thus 'blowing hot and cold.'

With regard to Mr. Jeſſe, the once ſupported and afterwards perſecuted by this irate gentleman, he occupied the honourable poſt of Surveyor of Her Majeſty's Parks and Palaces. He has been the author of ſeveral intereſting and inſtructive works—*Gleanings in Natural Hiſtory*, and others deſcriptive of nature,

of which he is a great lover, and appears to be a man who only requires to be perſonally known to be deeply regarded. Mr. Jeſſe ſeems to have borne the Doctor's inſults with becoming indifference.

Such are the two moſt prominent advocates. The reader will form his own opinion on their reſpective merits.

AT the commencement of this work I made alluſion to Tighe and Davis having obtained their information from a prejudiced ſource. I was not then thinking of Dr. Bromet, but of another authority, and I think the following incident will prove the juſtneſs of my aſſertion.

During my ſearch for information, being told that Mr. Davis was the gentleman who actually *wrote* concerning Herne's Oak in *The Annals of Windſor*, and feeling at that time a deſire to communicate with him on a point I was not ſatisfied upon, I was directed to an elderly gentleman in Windſor, a native, whoſe name I regret not feeling at liberty to mention, as the moſt likely to know Mr. Davis's addreſs. Upon being aſked the queſtion, he in return inquired of me my

reaſon for wiſhing to know? I told him I had ſeen a ſtatement in *The Annals of Windſor*, ſaying that the late tree did not meaſure more than fifteen feet in circumference at the largeſt part, and I wiſhed to aſcertain whether he (Mr. Davis) had ever meaſured it. This gentleman ſaid, that whatever information Mr. Davis had been furniſhed with concerning Herne's Oak, he had no doubt it had been obtained from him; but Mr. Ingram, he ſhould think, would be the beſt perſon to tell me the real ſize of the tree. Upon this, I told him that Mr. Ingram had informed me it was twenty-one feet round, or thereabout; he thereupon ſaid that he did not wiſh to be mixed up in any diſcuſſion, but he believed the late tree not to have been the real Herne's Oak, and did not wiſh to alter his opinion, or prevent any one elſe from holding a different one if they thought proper.

Now, here is unmiſtakable evidence that Tighe and Davis obtained their information from a *prejudiced* ſource.

I have no wiſh to quarrel with their informant for holding an adverſe opinion, but I do not admire his having given ſo much information againſt Herne's Oak and afterwards backing out of any diſcuſſion that may ariſe from it. It is not honourable, and ſhows a

bad caſe. I will, however, give the gentleman credit thus far—he unheſitatingly referred me to Mr. Ingram, as being the beſt able to give correct information on the ſize of the tree. This was exceedingly honeſt; and as to his own views on the queſtion of identity, I have no doubt he is perfectly ſincere in his belief, however blindly ſo. They proceed to ſay:—

'As to the third and laſt reaſon aſſigned, a careful examination of Collier's Map will ſhow that there is no foundation in it,' &c. &c.

In reply to this, I beg to refer the reader to p. 15, and the accompanying portion of Collier's Map, with ſketch and plan adjoining.

I HAVE now, I believe, gone fairly through all the principal points of evidence againſt Herne's Oak, and I truſt have ſhown on every portion good and ſufficient reaſon for forming an opinion that the real 'Simon Pure' was not cut down in 1796.

I wiſh not to preſs my own convictions upon the reader; but having kindly favoured me with a peruſal, let him draw his own concluſions upon the evidence ſet

before him; and if he but give me credit for having ſufficient evidence to juſtify my own belief, I aſk no more.

One thing I muſt note in reference to the adverſe opinions of ſome intelligent men. We have ſeen how Mr. Charles Knight, who, juſt in the dawn of his bright intellect, firſt entertained a falſe impreſſion on the ſubject, by his going to look for the '*Oak with great ragg'd horns*,' to which he imagined he had been introduced by Shakſpeare. This was an error eaſily to be made in youth, eſpecially if the branches of the tree at all reſembled 'ragg'd horns;' which they probably did, at leaſt to his young, freſh mind. I refer to this, not for the purpoſe of ſhowing up Mr. Knight's error, or wiſhing to detract one iota from his great and well-merited reputation. My only object is to ſhow how eaſily a wrong notion is formed in our minds in youth, and how tenaciouſly it will cling to us, or we to it, in maturer years, even in the very beſt and brighteſt. And I cannot help thinking that many others, eſpecially men of leſs capacity, may have fallen into the ſame error as Mr. Knight has; if ſo—and who can ſay to the contrary?—is not here the myſtery explained why ſome believe in the ſuppoſititious tree inſtead of the *real Herne's Oak?*

1. Solid part of Tree.
2. Sound Wood.
3. Decayed Wood.
4. Hollow cavities.

In concluſion, I here introduce to the reader a perpendicular and tranſverſe ſection of Herne's Oak, ſhow-

ing the ſtate of decay it was in when it fell, although it bore no appearance of it on the outſide. Decay had waſted the trunk internally, from the bottom upwards, forming a conical cavity to the height of 15 ft. from the baſe, where the remaining wood in ſome places was not more than two inches in thickneſs, in others from four to five at moſt. The upper part was alſo waſted from the top downwards, but a portion in the middle of the trunk was perfectly ſolid, and ſome good wood remained around the hollow parts. The ſound wood is firm and mellow in texture, but from long expoſure, being unprotected by bark, fiſſures are frequently met with at a great depth from the ſurface, which ſometimes baffle the artiſt or operative employed upon it.

THE reader will, perhaps, be pleaſed to know that a Caſket, deſigned and executed by the Author, to encaſe an exceedingly fine copy of the rare firſt folio edition of Shakſpeare's Comedies, Hiſtories, and Tragedies, and the firſt collected edition of his Poems, has been made from the wood of this venerable tree, for Miſs Burdett Coutts: the wood having been very graciouſly granted by her Majeſty the Queen for that purpoſe.

The reader having been ſo far indulgent, I know will allow me to ſubmit to him my own theory as to the earlier hiſtory of the tree forming the ſubject of this work.

MY opinion is, that the tradition of Herne the Hunter was not the cauſe of the Oak firſt being held in eſtimation, but the conſequence of its having been previouſly eſteemed.

In my opinion this tree, from the firſt, gave promiſe of being a very fine one; from its trunk projected arms in every direction, crowned in ſummer with rich foliage. Before the trees around it were lopped, this was noticed as the beſt adapted for ſhelter; and ſo, when the other trees were lopped in winter for the deer to feed upon the bark, when the ground was covered with ſnow, this was preſerved by the foreſters or keepers for the ſake of their own ſhelter in ſummer, when the other trees were rendered incapable of affording it, and it became a favourite haunt for them. Cattle alſo delighted to take ſhelter beneath its ſpreading branches from the ſummer's ſcorching ſun; and a remarkable fact occurred after the tree fell—in the cutting it up two iron holdfaſts were diſcovered embedded in the ſolid wood, at a conſiderable diſtance from the ſurface. I had this on the authority of Mr. Ingram, and jocularly aſked him if he ſuppoſed Herne the Hunter had driven them in to hang himſelf to? He ſmiled, and ſaid he did not ſuppoſe they were put

there for that purpoſe, but he had no doubt they had been driven in to tie horſes up to, when the tree was comparatively young. One of theſe, he told me, was carefully removed and ſent to her Majeſty, who commanded it to be put into the muſeum at the Caſtle.

This incident is a remarkable corroboration of my theory, and confirms my belief that the tree was uſed by the keepers as a place of ſhelter long before the tradition was attached to it, and that that circumſtance was the reaſon why the 'woodman ſpared *that* tree' in the firſt place, when all the others around were hacked and hewed without compunction.

Some have ſaid that Herne could not have hung himſelf to that tree, from its not having low branches; but the trunk gave evidence of the lower branches having at one time been removed from it, which probably occurred when the avenue was made, for the purpoſe of having a clear walk under it, which theſe may have interrupted.

If it were neceſſary to give evidence of its having been 'untimely blaſted,' to prove its identity, the great oak referred to by our opponents, at about 200 yds. diſtance—which I found to meaſure 29 ft. round at 4 ft. from the ground, called 'Queen Elizabeth's Oak,'

or 'the Queen's Oak,' eſtimated at about 1000 years old—is ſtill flouriſhing, although a pollard, and ſeveral feet more in circumference than Herne's Oak: why ſhould a maiden tree, eſtimated at only about 650 years, have ceaſed to vegetate and fallen to the ground from ſheer decay, while one more ancient ſtill remains,

> 'In ſummer time a hale green tree,
> His arms ſo ſtrong, the proudeſt he
> Of all in that vicinity,'

unleſs untimely decay had ſeized upon and deſtroyed it? Still, I do not wiſh the reader to conclude that Herne the Hunter ſupernaturally 'blaſted' it. I would rather he ſhould ſuppoſe it is with trees as with mortals, in ſome of whom the vital ſpark naturally ceaſes to exiſt much earlier than in others.

I CANNOT leave off without adding another extract from Mr. Jeſſe's *Scenes and Occupations of Country Life*, publiſhed 1853. P. 42 he ſays:—

'It is an intereſting fact, that the morning after the King of Pruſſia arrived at Windſor Caſtle, in order to be preſent

at the chriſtening of the Prince of Wales, the whole of his Majeſty's ſuite, including the celebrated Baron Humboldt, inquired their way to Herne's Oak. This was the firſt object of their attention and curioſity, and probably of their veneration. The ſplendours of the Caſtle, its pictures, the noble ſcenery ſurrounding it, and the many hiſtorical facts connected with it, were objects of inferior intereſt, compared to a ſingle time-deſtroyed, withered tree, yet rich with recollections of the genius of our immortal Shakſpeare. On arriving at the ſacred tree they gazed at it in ſilence—but each of the party gathered a leaf from the ivy which is now clinging to the decaying trunk, as a relic which they intended to carry back to their own country, to be ſhown there as one of no common intereſt. The nobleman who accompanied the party to the tree related this little anecdote to me, and I muſt confeſs it afforded me no ſmall degree of gratification.

'Pleaſing as it is to ſee foreigners haſten to look at a tree which our great Bard has immortalized, it is ſtill more ſo to have the perfect conviction that, if any tree in the Park has a right to be conſidered as the real Herne's Oak, it is the tree in queſtion. In a former work I ventured to give this opinion, and facts which have ſince come to my knowledge have only ſerved to confirm it.'

This incident ſhows how thoroughly the belief in the identity of this tree prevailed in the minds of thoſe illuſtrious foreigners, and it is ſcarcely poſſible that ſuch perſonages as theſe would have been led to believe,

or by the Royal family permitted to hold in ſuch eſteem, this memorial, had it been a ſuppoſititious thing and not a reality. It is not reaſonable to think that ſuch a groſs impoſture on their credulity would have been perpetrated. The *moſt reliable evidence* always, from age to age, having been at the command of the Royal family, the truth ought to be known by them the moſt certainly.

WE have ſeen how pre-eminently this tree fits into the plot invented by our immortal Shakſpeare. We have the evidence of its having been preſerved, in preference to all the other trees in the Park, from its infancy. We have the mute but unqueſtionable evidence in its favour given by William III. We have the evidence of ſome of the oldeſt inhabitants of Windſor, whoſe aſſertions go back as far as the time of that monarch. We have the valuable evidence of Mr. Gilpin, given at a period previous to the deſtruction of the ſuppoſititious tree. We have the tacit conſent of all thoſe who were living at the time that that tree was cut down, profeſſing belief but practiſing diſbelief; who, having had five

years' warning of its intended fate, did not think it worth reſcuing. We have the evidence of George III., who ordered this falſe tree to be cut down becauſe it was confounded with the real one, his Majeſty even refuſing ſome chairs that were preſented to him, made out of its wood, on the ground that Herne's Oak was (at that time) ſtill ſtanding, and we know the particular care the King always took of it. We alſo know that many others at that period thoroughly believed in the maiden tree, and have ſeen the groſs error committed by one of the moſt intelligent evidences againſt it. We have alſo ſeen how George IV., William IV., and the other members of the Royal family of that day, believed in its identity, and many others alſo. And laſt, but not leaſt, the evidence of our preſent gracious Queen Victoria, who, immediately the venerable object fell, in order to perpetuate its exiſtence to future ages, unſelfiſhly commanded its remains to be reduced to convenient forms and ſizes, for diſtribution and uſe, that many others may have an opportunity of preſerving a relic of this *intereſting memorial* as well as her Majeſty, who has had ſeveral intereſting articles made of its wood.

Surely, courteous reader, taking every fact in

connexion with this 'time-deſtroyed,' 'withered' tree, into conſideration, there remains ſcarcely a loophole through which you may eſcape believing; and you will cordially unite with me in the opinion I entertain, that the venerable tree which on the laſt day of Auguſt, 1863, fell to the ground from natural decay, was, undoubtedly, the Oak around which the Hunter walked—was, in truth,

HERNE'S OAK.

THE CASKET.

DESCRIPTION OF CASKET,

Made for the purpoſe of containing the Firſt Folio Edition of Shakſpeare's Dramatic Works, and the Firſt Collected Edition of his Poems.

IT is formed in ſuch a manner that the front falls down ſimilar to a ſecretary drawer, diſcloſing its contents, which are at the bottom, the grand object of ſolicitous care,—the firſt folio edition, which occupies the whole length and breadth, and about two-thirds the height of interior. The upper portion is divided into three parts: in the centre is the firſt collected edition of Shakſpeare's Poems, and on either ſide are drawers intended for the reception of relics, or intereſting memoranda relating to the immortal Bard, or his works. Both books and drawers are ejected by concealed ſprings, upon touching knobs unobtruſively placed for the purpoſe.

The ſtyle of ornament adopted is of the period when Shakſpeare lived. The top contains a portrait in bas-relief, after the engraving by Martin Droeſhout, publiſhed in the encloſed edition, with the inſcription 'Shakeſpeare, 1623,' in the type of the period around: this is encircled by a wreath of Bay, interlaced with ornamental ſcroll and ſtrap-work; and on either ſide of this are panels, containing the dates of the Poet's birth and death. At the corners are globes with Oak wreaths, ſignifying his univerſal and enduring fame. The moulding around the top is decorated with Ivy leaves.

The front contains the Arms of Miss Burdett Coutts, and the Monogram 'A. G. B. C.:' the back, the ſhield and creſt of Shakſpeare; the ends have the Monograms 'W. S.' and 'A. H.,' *i. e.* William Shakſpeare and Ann Hathaway.

At the angles of the Caſket are niches, each having an Oak-tree in bas-relief at the back, with Ivy growing up around their trunks. In theſe niches are four figures ſelected from *The Merry Wives of Windſor*, viz. Falſtaff and Dame Quickly, Slender, and ſweet Ann Page, in full relief. The two latter in front, the former behind.

Stars, torches, and jewels are introduced into the

decoration; their ſignification being the brightneſs, glory, and value of the works contained within; and the whole is made out of the Real Herne's Oak, except the fittings and lining of the Caſket, which are of ſweet cedar.

Within the caſket, on a ſilver plate, is the following inſcription:—

'Who chooſeth me ſhall gain what many men deſire.'

This Caſket, carved out of HERNE'S OAK—the tree mentioned in the MERRY WIVES OF WINDSOR—contains

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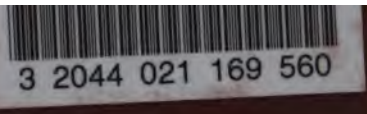
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